

Z E A L

FOR THE

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ZEAL for the CIVIL and RELIGIOUS  
Interests of MANKIND recommended;

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SERMON

PREACHED IN THE

HIGH CHURCH of EDINBURGH,

ON

THURSDAY, MAY 23. 1754.

AT THE

Opening of the GENERAL ASSEMBLY of  
the Church of SCOTLAND.

BY

ALEXANDER WEBSTER,

One of the Ministers of Edinburgh. *13*

EDINBURGH:

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TO  
The RIGHT HONOURABLE  
J O H N,  
EARL of HOPETOUN,  
HIS MAJESTY'S  
HIGH COMMISSIONER  
TO  
The GENERAL ASSEMBLY of the Church  
of SCOTLAND.

MY LORD,

THE high character which Your  
Grace now sustains with so  
much honour and dignity; Your di-  
stinguished zeal for our happy consti-  
tution in church and state, especially  
during the late times of danger and  
rebellion; and Your uncommon gene-  
rosity,

[     ]

rosity, of which this city in particular affords so many lasting monuments; have encouraged the following plain discourse, in favour of public virtue, to hope for Your Grace's patronage; and have given me the happy opportunity of testifying to the world the high esteem and respect with which I have the honour to be,

MY LORD,

YOUR GRACE'S

most obliged,

most humble, and

most obedient servant,

Edinburgh,

June 1st

1754.

ALEX. WEBSTER.

A  
S E R M O N

PREACH'D BEFORE THE  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY, &c.

PSALM CXXXVII. 5, 6.

IF I FORGET THEE, O JERUSALEM,  
LET MY RIGHT HAND FORGET HER CUN-  
NING.

IF I DO NOT REMEMBER THEE, LET MY  
TONGUE CLEAVE TO THE ROOF OF MY  
MOUTH; IF I PREFER NOT JERUSALEM  
ABOVE MY CHIEF JOY.

**T**HIS psalm, whoever was the writer of it,  
appears to have been compos'd in the latter  
days of the Jewish church, during the Babylo-  
nish captivity, or immediately after it; for, in the  
first and second verses we find the people of God  
mingling their tears with the waters, and hanging  
their harps upon the willows of Babylon, when  
they remembred the former glory, and considered  
the



the present desolations of Zion: the third verse represents the inhumane and barbarous treatment they met with from their enemies, who, instead of pitying, triumph'd over their misery, by calling for mirth and a song; to which these brave captives resolutely answered in the fourth verse, "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" Shall we prostitute these songs, sacred to the honour of Zion's God, to mere sport and pastime? shall we sing these divine anthems, peculiar to the temple-service, when banished from the temple, and exiles in this land of idolaters? no, says the psalmist in the words of our text, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning; if I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy," or, the head of my joy: *q. d.* If, unmindful of thy desolations and thy ruin, I should gratify the desires of thine enemies, by profaning thy music and thy songs, let my right hand lose all its skill of touching the harp any more; if I do not remember thee with the most hearty sympathy and concern, and prefer thy welfare and prosperity to every worldly joy, let my lips be for ever closed, and my tongue be for ever silent.

As



As Jerusalem was the capital city of Judea, and the seat of empire, where were “set thrones  
“ of judgment, and the thrones of the house  
“ of David (a),” it may here fitly represent the whole nation of the Jews; and as it was the holy city, “whither the tribes of the Lord went  
“ up unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks  
“ to the name of the Lord (b),” it was also a proper type of the visible church: in which view, the words of our text are the language of a heart full of zeal for the welfare of its native country, and the church of God; and, in a striking and elegant manner, set before us a lively example of a truly public spirit.

IN discoursing upon this subject, I do not propose to confine myself to that love which every one ought to feel for his native country, as distinguished from the rest of the world, or for that particular church of which he is a member: but to consider the argument in the most extended light, by shewing what weighty obligations we are under to be zealous for the civil and religious interests of mankind in general; whence it will follow, by strong and necessary consequence, with what warmth of affection we ought

B

to

(a) Psal. cxxii. 5. (b) Psal. cxxii. 4.

to seek the good of those with whom we are more nearly connected, as subjects of the same kingdom, and members of the same church. And, thro' divine assistance, I would argue,

FIRST, From the law of our creation, and the law of grace, as illustrated by the precepts and examples which we find in sacred writ: And,

SECONDLY, From the nature of universal benevolence itself; as constituting the most amiable and worthy character; as conversant about objects of the greatest moment and importance; and as inseparably connected with our own true and best interests.

LET us then consider, in the

FIRST place, The obligations we are under to promote the public welfare from the law of our creation, and the law of grace, as illustrated by the precepts and examples in sacred writ.

“ HAVE we not all one father, (say the inspired writers) and hath not one God created

“ us,

2

“ us, who hath made of one blood all nations  
 “ of men, and is King over all the earth (c) ?”  
 And it is the voice of nature itself, that mankind  
 are in reality brethren, the children of the same  
 common parent, the offspring of the Father of  
 the spirits of all flesh, and the subjects of his uni-  
 versal empire: so that both reason and revelation  
 lead us to view the most distant regions of the  
 earth as containing only different branches of the  
 same family, or as districts of the same kingdom,  
 under the same divine government; and to consi-  
 der ourselves as citizens of the world, parts of  
 that great WHOLE, to whom therefore nothing  
 that relates to the good or prejudice of the whole  
 ought to be indifferent †.

AND if we reflect on the various powers and  
 faculties, the dispositions and affections, with which  
 we are endued by the wise and benevolent Author  
 of our beings, it will plainly appear, that we were  
 not made for ourselves only, but for others also;  
 and consequently that we ought to seek the good  
 of others, according to our several abilities, and  
 the opportunities afforded us.

NOR

(c) Mal. ii. 10. Acts xvii. 26. Psal. xlvii. 7.

† Homo sum, humani nihil à me alienum puto.



NOR can it be denied, that such are the dependent necessitous circumstances of man, that he cannot live by himself with any degree of comfort or safety: and if a man cannot live by himself, neither ought he to live to himself. We, of all other beings, when separated from one another, are the most joyless and helpless: and tho' God hath implanted in parents and children such affections as incline them to assist and relieve each other, yet the wants and dangers of human life are so many and great, that no particular family, however numerous, is sufficient of itself for all the purposes of well-being and comfort. We need the assistance of others: we need the public favour and protection; and therefore are bound, in our turn, to be useful to the public, who have a natural right to our good offices, and whose claim to them is interwoven with our frame.

WHAT hath been said from the law of our creation, is strongly enforced upon us Christians by the law of grace, which unites us into one mystical body, whereof Christ is the head; and which considers all believers as members of the same undivided catholic church, whereof Jesus is the Lord and King: in this respect the whole people of God are called the children of  
Zion,



Zion, and Jerusalem the mother of them all: hence Paul, having represented to the Corinthians the strict union betwixt the members of the natural body, whence results such mutual sympathy and concern, that there is no schism in the body, but the members have the same care one for another, concludes, "Now are ye the body of Christ; and members in particular (d)."

Now, if the ties of nature are so strong and powerful, how much more those of grace? if, as men and brethren according to the flesh, we are bound to help one another, need I say this is incumbent upon us as brethren in Christ, link'd together in the surest bonds of love and friendship, within the same everlasting covenant, and animated by the same spirit?

THE argument, in this view, will appear more convincing, when we consider the precepts and examples of sacred writ: the genius of our holy religion breathes every where, a disinterested regard, for the glory of God and the happiness of mankind; that charity and benevolence, which seeketh not her own, but the good of others, appears almost in every page of the

New

(d) 1 Corinth. xii. 27.

New Testament; so that it is not easy to conceive what could tempt a celebrated writer to object to Christianity, that it nowhere recommends private friendship, or the love of our country. This was doubtless included in the royal law, under the Old Testament, of "loving our neighbour as ourselves (e)." And it is the language of the New; "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others (f):" Paul exhorts the Galatians to "do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith (g):" "To add to godliness, brotherly-kindness; and to brotherly-kindness, charity (h)," is the doctrine not only of Peter, but of the rest of the apostles: which precept is carried to the highest perfection by our Saviour himself, who commands us to love one another, as he hath loved us (i); nay, to extend our regards to all our brethren of mankind, the most unworthy not excepted, in imitation of our heavenly Father, "who sendeth rain on the just and the unjust, and is kind to the evil and unthankful (k)."

NO I

(e) Lev. xix. 18. (f) Philip. ii. 4. (g) Gal. vi. 10.  
 (h) 2 Pet. i. 7. (i) John xv. 12. (k) Matth. v. 45.  
 Luke vi. 35.

NOR is this divine virtue more conspicuous in the precepts, than in the lives of Christ and his apostles, and other holy men of old. Need we go to Rome or Greece, for instances of those who preferred the public interest to their own private advantage? No, my brethren; the bibles which we hold in our hands furnish far more shining and illustrious examples: animated by this noble principle, Moses, the great lawgiver of the Jews, was willing to die for his people, tho' the most ungrateful rebellious race (l): Eli trembled more for the ark of God, than for the destruction of his family (m); and the royal psalmist could say unto God himself, "The zeal of thine  
" house hath eaten me up (n):" in what moving strains do we find Elisha, Jeremiah, and the other prophets, mourning over the desolations of Zion, longing and fasting, and praying that the "set time  
" to favour her might come, taking pleasure in  
" her very stones, and favouring the dust there-  
" of (o)?" how steadfastly did Daniel adhere to the interests of true religion and liberty, when thrown into a den of lions (p)? and the three children, when cast into Nebuchadnezzar's furnace, seven times heated (q)? But time would  
fail

(l) Exodus xxxii. 32. (m) 1 Samuel iv. 13, 18.  
(n) Psal. lxix. 9. (o) Psal. cii. 13, 14. (p) Dan. vi.  
10,—16. (q) Dan. iii. 13,—23.



fail me to tell of Isaiah, and of Nehemiah, and Ezra also, and of Samuel, and other saints; whose zealous appearances for God, in times of public danger and distress, are celebrated in scripture to their immortal honour.

AND what shall I say of the apostles, and first followers of the Lamb, who loved not their lives unto the death, that they might fulfil the ministry, and the work, which they had received of the Lord Jesus? Language cannot express that fervent zeal, and brotherly affection, which Paul felt when he spoke these surprising words, "I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh (r);" and, lest we should imagine his concern extended no further than to his own countrymen, the Jews, he would have us know, as he tells the Colossians, "what great conflict he had, not only for the saints and faithful brethren which were at Colosse, but for them of Laodicea, and for as many as had not seen his face in the flesh (f)."

IN like manner, the other apostles, instead of confining their labours within the narrow sphere  
of

(r) Rom. ix. 3. (f) Col. ii. 1;

of their particular friends and countrymen, went from place to place, from city to city, casting out devils, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, forcing their way thro' numberless hazards and dangers; and having finished their painful course, sealed their testimony with their blood.

THESE indeed are shining examples of a truly public spirit: and yet one still remains far more perfect and glorious; the example of our blessed Saviour himself, who came from heaven to earth, to live and die for a sinful, rebellious world. The illustrious tribe of patriots, martyrs and confessors, have done much and well; but Jesus has done infinitely more and better. What Paul says of himself is applicable to his Lord and Master in a far higher sense; "In labours more abundant, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness; and besides those things that are without, that which came upon him daily, the care of all the churches. Who was weak, and he was not weak? who was offended, and he did not burn (t)?" With what ardent zeal, and indefatigable labour, did he seek to gather Jerusalem, as a hen gathereth her chickens

C

under

(t) 2 Cor. xi. 23, 27, 28, 29.

under her wings! and when she would not hearken to his compassionate intreaties, how moving his lamentation over her, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, if thou hadst known, even thou at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes (u)."

HIS amiable character is elegantly summ'd up, by the apostle Peter, in these comprehensive words, "who went about doing good (x)." Not satisfied with blessing his relations and disciples, or those who came to him, his enlarged heart sought every opportunity of extending its affectionate regards to the whole human race; doing good both to Jews and Gentiles, to the souls as well as the bodies of men; restoring them at once to the divine favour and to the divine image; and having erected the kingdom of God among men, on the ruins of superstition and idolatry, he died a glorious victim for the honour of God and the salvation of his people, greatly pouring out his soul upon the cross, "as the propitiation for the sins, not of the Jews only, but of the whole world (y)."

AND

(u) Luke xiii. 34. xix. 42. (x) Acts x. 38. (y) 1 Jo. ii. 2.



AND thus you see how the united voice of nature and of grace, the law and the prophets, Christ and his apostles, call upon us as children of the great Parent of mankind, and members of the body of Christ, to prefer the public welfare above our chief joy. We proceed therefore, as was proposed, in the

SECOND place, To recommend such a generous public spirit from its own nature and excellency; As constituting the most amiable and worthy character; As conversant about objects of the greatest moment and importance; And as inseparably connected with our own true and best interests.

“WHATSOEVER things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise (z);” These are all comprehended in that general good-will, and public affection, of which we now speak. If we esteem the affectionate parent, or the dutiful child, the loving brother, or the faithful friend; what esteem

is

(z) Philip. iv. 8.

is due to the Friend of mankind, and the Lover of souls !

IN the exercise of the more private virtues, we see only parts of a character, and many things are still wanting ; but, in the exercise of universal beneficence, we see all the social virtues happily united ; we see a character carried to its highest perfection ; a man resembling God himself, by diffusing blessings and happiness around him.

REPRESENT to yourselves such a worthy patriot in the senate, greatly pleading, in face of approaching danger, the cause of an injur'd nation or church : Follow him to the camp, in his garments roll'd in blood, where, unmov'd amidst all the horrors of war and instruments of death, he fights for his people and the cities of his God ; And see him at last falling a sacrifice in the noble contest ; or see him, if brought to a scaffold, not accepting deliverance, but calmly resigning life itself as a glorious martyr for his God and his country : and you behold a sight lovely in the eyes of God, and of all good men ; human nature in its greatest glory and perfection ; a character shining with such unfading lustre, as must necessarily command respect from enemies themselves.

WHEREAS,

WHEREAS, on the contrary, there can be nothing more hateful and mean, than a mercenary spirit; a man wrapt up wholly in himself, forgetting the very end and design of his being; forgetting that subordination which God hath established in his world; breaking thro' every tie of duty and gratitude, love and benevolence; and all this, to answer no higher purpose than the gratification of his own irregular and selfish appetites: such a man, tho' deck'd with the ornaments and spoils of his fellow creatures, is, in reality, more odious, and a greater blemish in the moral, than the most ugly and deformed creature can be in the natural world.

IT was likewise observed, That we are bound to prefer the public good to private advantage; not only as such a temper and conduct constitutes the most amiable and exalted character, but as it is conversant about objects of the greatest moment and importance.

GREAT was the object of the psalmist's zeal in the text, the whole nation and church of the Jews; but greater, still, is the object of that enlarged affection we are now recommending. We speak of the highest of all social duties, regard to the



the religious, as well as to the civil interests of men; all their concerns, in reference to soul and body, time and eternity; respecting not a few, a family, a city, a particular nation or church, but all our fellow men, and all our fellow Christians. And can we conceive any pursuit more worthy of the rational nature, or more becoming the heaven-born soul? a pursuit which stretches its happy influence beyond the limits of mortality, into the eternal world, and follows the redeemed of the Lord thro' all the growing ages of that everlasting state.

GLORIOUS things were spoken of Jerusalem of old, which may with great reason be applied to the gospel church; "the mount Zion to which we are now come, the palace of the eternal King, the perfection of beauty, and the joy of the whole earth; the new Jerusalem, the general assembly, and church of the first-born (a);" A glorious church indeed, the city of the living God, founded by his Wisdom, preserved by his Power, animated by his Spirit, and governed by his laws, nay, purchased with his blood. Who would not seek her good always, as the best and the noblest means of advancing the honour of God, and the happiness of his creatures?

(a) Heb xii. 22, 23.

creatures? To which may be added what was observed,

IN the last place, That such a generous concern for the public welfare, is inseparably connected with our own true and best interests.

WHAT is the public, the ALL, but the individuals taken together, who must therefore share in one common undivided fate? 'Tis here, in the body politic, as in the body natural, where the whole members are mutually happy or miserable. A little reflexion with respect to our temporal affairs, may convince us, that private happiness is not to be enjoyed on any sure and lasting foundation, but in subordination to the public good. Was every one to seek his own peace and quiet, without regard to that of his neighbour; was every one to pursue his particular designs in opposition to the general interest; how miserably should every one find himself mistaken? The contest would run higher and higher, till, as one observes in another case, it terminated in a war of all men against ALL, the plain consequence of which would be the destruction of ALL.

A MAN may indeed advance his own private interest for a while, in opposition to the good of the  
society

society of which he is a member ; but surely “he stands on slippery places, and may be brought into desolation as in a moment (b).” While he is unsuspecting no harm, some unforeseen event cuts off his future hopes, and brings him down from all the heights of his imaginary happiness ; agreeable to the psalmist’s observation, “I have seen the “ wicked great in power, and spreading himself “ like a green bay tree : yet he passed away, “ and lo he was not ; yea, I sought him, but he “ could not be found (c).” He cannot always deceive the injured ; they begin at length to feel their sufferings, and seldom fail to make sufficient reprisals : But, should he escape punishment from man, there is a God above him, who sooner or later will bring him into judgment. Death opens a passage to that awful state, where, from him “ who hath made such a bad use of his talents, “ shall be taken even that which he hath ;” and the irreversible sentence shall go forth, “Cast ye “ the wicked servant into utter darkness : there “ shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth (d).”

ON the contrary, the disinterested friend of mankind, who makes every one’s concern his own,

(b) Psal. lxxiii. 18, 19. (c) Psal. xxxvii. 35, 36.  
(d) Matth. xxv. 24,—30.



own, and chearfully gives up personal ease and advantage, when it comes in competition with the general good: how blessed is that man in the exercise of those noble and generous affections, which yield the most refined delight; and most exalted pleasure! how happy in the testimony of his own conscience, which to him is a continual feast, and the matter of his rejoicing! and how infinitely more happy in the approbation of one greater than his conscience, the supreme Lord and Judge of the whole earth!

SUCH a man, the friend of all, is beloved and esteemed by all: he passes thro' the various scenes of life with safety and respect; if in offices of trust, he holds them by the surest tenure, the good-will of his fellow-subjects: and when, as to this world, he is no more, his name shall be had in everlasting remembrance: and my audience will bear me witness, that our own nation hath, of late, afforded some very striking examples of this amiable character.

BUT, if his LOT is cast in the worst of times, when he must not only quit with the comforts of life, but lose even LIFE itself for the sake of his God and his Country; he

D

shall

shall find IT in that other and better world, where God commands the blessing, even life for evermore (e).

HAVING, on a former occasion \*, illustrated this branch of the argument at greater length; I shall not at present insist farther, on the inseparable connection between public and private happiness, with respect to our temporal affairs: and I need scarce say, how much our spiritual interests depend on the prosperity of Zion, the church of God, as being her mystical children, and members of the same body, who must necessarily suffer or rejoice with one another.

“THAT the haters of Zion shall be confounded and turned back: and shall be as grass upon the house-tops, which withereth after it groweth up, while they shall prosper that love her (f);” is expressly declared in holy writ, and stands confirmed by the testimony of all ages: And it must be so; for, if God loves the gates of Zion, he will love them that love her: and they whom God loves must be happy.

WHILE

(e) Matth. x. 39.

\* Sermon preach'd before the Magistrates on Philip. ii. 4.

(f) Psal. cxxix. 5, 6. cxxii. 6.

WHILE they who are lukewarm and indifferent in the cause of Christ, are represented by the sacred writers, as objects of the divine displeasure (g); they who are zealously affected towards his interest, are considered as the special objects of the divine care and protection \*; his peculiar treasure, in whom his soul delighteth; the excellent ones of the earth, "who shall see the good of his chosen, rejoice in the gladness of his nation, and glory with his inheritance (h)." And what shall I say of that happiness and felicity, which awaits such faithful servants, when welcom'd to the joy of their Lord? If in that day, not so much as a cup of cold water, given to one in the name of a disciple, shall lose its reward; how inconceivably great, how glorious must his reward be, who, from a principle of love to God and men, hath lived and died in the service of God and men! for him, indeed, is sown a joyful light in the Zion that is above. And there he "shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever (i)."

THESE are only a few hints of what might have

(g) Zechar. xii. 3. Rev. iii. 16.

\* Ezek. ix. 4. Rev. vii. 3, 9, 4.

(h) Psal. cvi. 5. xcvii. 11. (i) Dan. xii. 3.



have been represented, in a variety of particulars, for illustrating the doctrinal part of our subject.

BUT it is proper we should proceed to the practical improvement of what hath been said.

THE distressed circumstances of the people and church of God, which gave rise to the moving lamentation in the verses preceeding our text, ought to inspire us with the most lively sense of the happiness we in this nation enjoy. THE JEWS were exiles from their native country, under the oppression of a cruel arbitrary tyrant; WE are the subjects of the best of kings, enjoying all the blessings of British liberty. THEY were banished from the tabernacle, and the altar of God; TO US the doors of his house and sanctuary are continually open. THEY were captives in the land of an idolatrous prince, who prohibited their solemn assemblies, and courts of judicature; but WE are this day to meet in a judicative capacity, under the royal countenance and approbation; and have now BEFORE OUR EYES, the most convincing proof, with how much propriety our GRACIOUS SOVEREIGN may be stiled a nursing father to this church.

WHAT

WHAT grateful returns might have been expected from a people so highly favoured! what proper improvement of such invaluable privileges! But alas! my brethren, how have these things been perverted to the worst of purposes! hath not our civil liberty been abused by the most daring licentiousness, and affronted by repeated rebellions? and hath not our religious liberty been turned into an occasion of propagating atheism and infidelity?

THE contempt of the glorious gospel of Christ; the neglect of divine institutions; the profanation of that day, sacred to the honour of the Redeemer; the avowed impiety of those who have cast off all regard for God and religion; the more secret wickedness of such as have at best but a form of godliness, while destitute of its power and life; the want, among too many of the professed followers of Christ, of that sympathy, that love, and mutual forbearance, which is the distinguishing badge of his disciples; the angry debates and warm contests; the animosities and divisions, which rend and distract even the friends of Jesus; and in consequence of all this, the withdrawals of that divine Spirit, whose presence is the beauty, the glory, and the ALL of a Christian church; are mournful proofs, that however happy and prosperous we are in respect of our outward  
state

state and condition, vital religion, and practical godliness languish apace.

IN saying this much, I have doubtless said nothing that can be denied: and God is my witness, I mean not to indulge a censorious humour; but would wish to persuade the friends of religion and liberty, how much these important interests call for their warmest zeal, and most vigorous endeavours; when, “by the abounding of iniquity, the love of many waxeth cold (k),” “and all men, as Paul says of his times, (meaning the far greater part) seek their own, not the things which are Christ’s (l).”

SUFFER then, my brethren, the word of exhortation; and seeing “the perilous days are come, in which men are lovers of their own selves (m);” let us imitate the noble, the generous few, who, warmed with the love of God, and the love of their country, prefer JERUSALEM to their chiefest joy.

AND here let it be observed, that whatever arguments, for promoting the WELFARE of mankind in general, arise from the laws of nature and

(k) Matth. xxiv. 12. (l) Philip. ii. 21. (m) 2 Tim. iii. 1, 2.



and of grace, from the practice and writings of the prophets and apostles, from the command and example of the great God our Saviour, and from our own best interests; THEY all strongly plead for the preservation and support of our constitution in particular, both in church and state, as the great means of our happiness in this world, and in the world to come.

THE excellency of our civil constitution will readily be admitted, as the just mean between absolute monarchy, the parent of tyranny and oppression, and a merely popular government, the source of anarchy and confusion; a constitution, by which the prerogative of the crown, and the rights of the people, are mutually secured and duly regulated; a constitution, that does not allow the subject wantonly to rebel, on every act of male-administration, nor oblige him tamely to submit to the overthrow of its fundamental laws: a constitution, wisely calculated to promote what is the true original, and what ought to be the end of all government, the safety and happiness of the WHOLE: And I may add, a constitution, which provides the best security for our religious as well as civil liberty, and the strongest bulwark against Popery, that mystery of iniquity, and grand corrupter of Christianity.

WITH

WITH respect to our ecclesiastical constitution; that part of the church of God which he hath planted, and which the laws of the land have established amongst us; I may be allowed to say, especially from the place where I have now the honour to stand, that it deserves the highest regard, on many accounts; as a church of Christ, “built upon the foundation of the apostles and “prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief “corner-stone (n):” as a protestant church, reformed from the errors and tyranny, the superstition and will-worship, which sully the glory, and threaten the ruin, of many Christian temples; a church, whose rights and privileges have been handed down to us, at a vast expence of treasure and of blood: a church that hath been long the peculiar care of heaven, and particularly of late years, when God raised up a second William, as a Deliverer upon Mount Zion: and in one word, which demands the particular attention of the laity; a church, my brethren, that gives her ministers no dominion over your faith, or your conscience, but calls them to be “the helpers of your joy; not to lord it over God’s heritage, but to become ensamples to the flock, and not to seek YOURS but YOU; warning every man, and teaching

(n) Ephes. ii. 20.

ing every man, in all wisdom, that they may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus (o)."

SUCH is the nature of the BRITISH CONSTITUTION, and such are the principles of the CHURCH OF SCOTLAND, which I am now recommending to your esteem and regard; and had I been able to place the argument in its true and proper light, every heart, methinks, would have spoken the language of the text, "If I forget thee, O JERUSALEM; let my right hand forget her cunning: If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not JERUSALEM above my chief joy."

BUT whatever has been wanting in argument, will, I persuade myself, be more than supplied by your own observation: it therefore only remains, that I BESEECH and OBTEST all within these walls, as they regard the honour of God, the glory of the Redeemer, the happiness of their fellow-creatures, and their own well-being, to exert their utmost endeavours for the support of our civil and religious interests. Embarked in one bottom; subjects of the

E same

(o) 2 Cor. i. 24. 1 Peter v. 3. 2 Cor. xii. 14. Col. i. 28. Confess. of faith, chap. 20. § 2.



same kingdom, and members of the same church; Exposed to common dangers, and sharing in common privileges; Thus united, let the good of ALL be the first and chief care of ALL.

THE laudable zeal of the LEGISLATURE for civilizing the Highlands and Islands; the continuance of the ROYAL BOUNTY for diffusing the knowledge of Christianity thro' these remote corners of our country, where ignorance and vice have long had their seat; and his MAJESTY'S uncommon attention, since last rebellion, to these parts of his united kingdom, which has been followed with so great success, in reforming many old abuses †; ought to inspire us with a noble desire of imitating his paternal care.

THOSE

† The DISAFFECTED have been disarmed, and their dress changed: the heretable jurisdictions and ward-holdings, which tended to oppress the people, are abolished: certain forfeited estates have been annexed to the crown for increasing the number of parishes, and encouraging labour and manufacture: FORTS are built, and ROADS made through the most inaccessible places of the North; which will, in time, open a way to traffic and correspondence with the more Southern and civilized parts of the country, and of consequence will, at length, become the happy mean, of polishing the manners of the inhabitants, of rescuing them from their present slavish dependence on their chiefs, of banishing their high and destructive notions of clanship, and of changing their language, the strong hold of IGNORANCE and REBELLION.

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THOSE of my audience, whom God in his Providence has raised to superior stations in life, will permit me to rejoice in the many happy opportunities afforded them of promoting the public good: first, by their access to the throne itself, and their influence with those at the helm of affairs, who can build up what is cast down, strengthen what is weak, and confirm the more excellent parts of our constitution: next, by their own example; in paying a sacred regard to the interests of religion and virtue, of which the many blest effects would soon be universally felt: and lastly, “by being rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, of the abundance which God hath given them (p).” But of this the most passing hint is sufficient, while I speak to THOSE “who have clothed the naked, fed the hungry, visited the sick and the fatherless, and made the widow’s heart to sing for joy \*.” Thrice happy they, who have thus made to themselves friends of the riches of this world; our Saviour himself has told them, “That when it fails, they shall be received into everlasting habitations (q).”

THE MAGISTRATES and RULERS of this city, need not be informed, That as God’s  
vice-

(p) 1 Tim. vi. 17,—19. \* Job xxix. 13. (q) Luke xvi. 9.

vicegerents on earth, and vested with power and authority for the safety and advantage of the community, they are bound to rule for God, and the good of the community; “being a terror to evil doers, and a praise to them that do well (r);” imitating the excellent Mordecai, “who sought the wealth of his people, and spoke peace to all his seed (f).”

BUT I must not forget, my Reverend FATHERS and BRETHREN, to stir up your minds, and my own, by way of remembrance; That as subjects of the most gracious Prince, who have received so many marks of the ROYAL FAVOUR, we may show the highest zeal for his Majesty’s person and government; That as ministers of Christ, and servants of the most high God, whom he hath honoured to preach the gospel of his Son, we may count nothing too dear, not even life itself, for the support and advancement of his kingdom \*. Unworthy shall we be of this glorious character; unfaithful to our trust; ungrateful to the best of friends; and altogether unlike our great Lord and Master; if we do not prefer the good of souls, and the interest of religion, to our own private concerns.

WE

(r) 1 Pet. ii. 14. (f) Esther x. 3. \* Acts xx. 24.



WE learn both from the old and new testament,  
 “ That the conversion of sinners, the perfecting of  
 the saints, and the edifying of the body of Christ,  
 is the great end and design of our institution:  
 That God hath set us as watchmen on the walls  
 of our Jerusalem, to watch over all her interests,  
 and to guard her against all attacks: That we  
 are appointed stewards in God’s house, to di-  
 stribute the abundant provision he hath prepared  
 for his people: And that the time fast approaches,  
 when we must render an account of our stew-  
 ards-ship (t).”

AND doth it not highly concern us to have these  
 important, interesting truths, deeply impressed on  
 our own minds, that, in view of that all revealing  
 day, we may be animated “ To take heed to our-  
 selves, and to all the flock over which the holy  
 Ghost hath made us overseers; to feed the church  
 of God, which he hath purchased with his own  
 blood (u)?” Guarding all the avenues which  
 lead unto it, against those who would make  
 merchandise of souls: casting out every thing that  
 offends against the laws of Christ; and bearing  
 with his real servants who differ from us in lesser  
 matters:

(t) Acts xxvi. 18. Eph. iv. 12. Isa. lxii. 6. 1 Cor.  
 iv. 1. 1 Pet. iv. 10. Heb. xiii. 17. (u) Acts xx. 28.

matters : so preaching, and living, and acting, as we shall wish to have done in our departing moments, when the eternal world is opening upon us; “that when the chief Shepherd shall appear, “we may receive a crown of glory that fadeth “not away (x).”

ANIMATED with this glorious prospect, and fired with the noblest zeal for God, and the happiness of mankind, let us prefer JERUSALEM above our chief joy, adopting the pious resolution of Isaiah, “For ZION’s sake will I not hold my “peace, and for JERUSALEM’s sake I will not “rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as “brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp “that burneth (y).”

TIME forbids a particular address to the other characters and classes into which this audience might be divided : it must suffice to say, that the private Christian, as well as his rulers and teachers, has got something to do for God and his church, for his king and his country. “It is “not in our power, says one, to choose the “sphere in which we first appear in the world.  
“ It

(x) 1 Peter v. 4. (y) Isaiah lxii. 1.

“ It may not be in our power fairly and honestly  
 “ to rise much above the sphere in which we first  
 “ appeared. If any can do so, they should pro-  
 “ portionably shine according to their elevation.  
 “ But goodness and usefulness in the world must  
 “ be every Christian’s care. Whether high or  
 “ low, something may be done for God and  
 “ man: the rich have many ways wherewith to  
 “ benefit their fellow-creatures: the poor may  
 “ be rich in grace; may instruct, advise and di-  
 “ rect those about them; may glorify God by  
 “ their faith, humility and patience; and may do  
 “ good to men by their example, and by prayer,  
 “ the instituted mean of obtaining blessings for  
 “ themselves and others †.” *i. e.* In one word,  
 every one may advance the common interest, by  
 discountenancing vice, “ the ruin and reproach of  
 any people; and by promoting that work of righ-  
 teousness, which exalteth a nation, the effect  
 whereof shall be quietness and assurance for  
 ever (z).”

HEarken then, MEN, BRETHREN and FA-  
 THERS, to what the Lord our God requires;  
 that all of us, in imitation of our psalmist’s gene-  
 rous

† Religion of Jesus delineated.

(z) Prov. xiv. 34, Isaiah xxxii. 17.



rous concern for the church and nation of the Jews, may seek the good and peace of our Jerusalem, with the greatest sincerity and ardour; especially with respect to its religious interests.

FOR this purpose, it is highly necessary, that we should acquaint ourselves with our BIBLES, which, as you have heard, contain such exalted sentiments of the most generous disinterested goodness; which not only recommend the warmest zeal for the temporal and eternal interests of men, by the most amiable precepts and animating examples; but clearly point out, how every one, in particular, may act his part in promoting the GENERAL happiness and felicity.

AND it is beyond question necessary, to know the truth, as it is in Jesus, in the love thereof; to have an experimental knowledge of divine things; to have our hearts warmed with the love of God and of goodness (a). Till religion be rooted in the heart, it cannot possibly influence the life and practice (b). That man, who has not the kingdom of God within him, can have no real concern for its prosperity in the world without him.

IT

(a) Ephes. iv. 21. 2 Theff. ii. 10. 1 John iii. 17.  
(b) Matth. xii. 33,—35.

IT is equally necessary, to keep upon our minds a lively sense of the value and excellency of the several parts of our holy religion; careful never to depart from the foundation, nor to loose one stone of the building, persuaded that such is the inseparable connection between divine truths, that if the first link of the chain is wrested out of our hands, the second and third will follow of course.

BUT, while we esteem every truth precious, let us see to it, that our zeal be according to knowledge, proportioned to the value and importance of things, and conducted with that wisdom and prudence, that meekness and condescension, which so well become the ministers of the gospel of peace, and the followers of the Lamb; who are taught, "that the wrath of man worketh  
"not the righteousness of God (c)."

AND as it is self-evident, that the true interest and real honour of a Christian church, can only be promoted by a steady regard to the laws and institutions of Christ, the alone king and head of it; we would do well to take care, that the doctrines for which we contend, be the faith which

F

was

(c) James i. 20.

was once delivered to the saints (d); and not the doctrines and commandments of men; lest when we would appear for God, we be found to fight against him, and overthrow that very church which we mean to establish (e).

AGAIN, in our appearances for the public interest, every one ought to keep within his own sphere; that sphere in which Divine Providence has placed him. As in the natural body, so in the body politic or ecclesiastic, the several members have their respective places and offices assigned them, and cannot intrude upon one another, without breaking the harmony, and endangering the safety of the WHOLE: Hence Paul suffers us not to roam at large, but exhorts "every man" to abide in the same calling wherein he is called (f); and to act for God, by performing the duties proper to his own station, according to the talents bestowed upon him (g).

IT should likewise be observed, that having but "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God, and Father of all," we are under the strongest obligations "to stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of

(d) Jude 3. (e) Matth. xv. 6,--9. Col. ii. 18,--22. Acts v. 39. (f) 1 Cor. vii. 20. (g) Rom. xii. 4,--8.



“ of the gospel; endeavouring to keep the  
 “ unity of the spirit in the bond of peace (h):”  
 remembering, on the one hand, the words of  
 our Saviour himself, “ that a house (or a king-  
 “ dom) divided against itself, cannot stand (i);”  
 and, on the other, that union in the ways  
 of truth and righteousness shall become both our  
 glory and our strength; then shall Jerusalem,  
 as a city compactly built together, withstand  
 all the attacks of her open or secret enemies,  
 having salvation for walls and bulwarks.

ONCE more, if, according to our character  
 and circumstances, we would imitate the psalmist  
 in the text, and that illustrious cloud of witnesses,  
 whose ZEAL FOR THE LORD OF HOSTS is  
 recorded by the inspired writers with such pecu-  
 liar marks of the divine favour and approbation;  
 if, like them, we would become blessings to  
 society, and supports to the church of God;  
 we must carefully guard against “ the fear of  
 “ man, which, as Solomon tells us, bringeth a  
 “ snare (k).” Animated by that divine faith,  
 which “ endures as seeing him who is invi-  
 “ sible (l); Let us hold fast our profession with-  
 “ out

(h) Eph. iv. 3,---6. Philip. i. 27. (i) Matth. xii. 25.  
 (k) Prov. xxix. 25. (l) Heb. xi. 27.

“ out wavering, let us quit ourselves like men, and  
 “ be strong (m).” Courage and resolution will  
 be found of the last importance, while we are em-  
 ployed in promoting the divine honour, and  
 establishing the kingdom of Christ in an ungrate-  
 ful persecuting world; where we may be called to  
 suffer as well as to argue for our God, and must  
 be ready, not only to be bound, but to die for  
 the name of the Lord Jesus (n).

ON the whole, 'tis an observation of divine  
 authority, verified by constant experience, “ Ex-  
 “ cept the Lord build the house, they labour in  
 “ vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city,  
 “ the watchman watcheth but in vain (o).” I be-  
 seech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of  
 God, and for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for  
 the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together in  
 your prayers to God for us, that the service which  
 we have for Jerusalem may be acceptable and  
 profitable to the saints; that our gathering toge-  
 ther, at this time, in a national assembly, may be  
 with joy by the will of God; and that all our  
 endeavours for the public good may be crown'd  
 with abundant success.

“ Ye

(m) Heb. x. 23. 1 Cor. xvi. 13. (n) Acts xxi. 13.  
 (o) Psal. cxxvii. 1.

“ YE that make mention of the Lord, keep  
 “ not silence; and give him no rest, till he esta-  
 “ blish, and till he make JERUSALEM a praise  
 “ in the earth (p):” Lifting up your hearts with  
 your hands unto God in the heavens, pleading in  
 the prevailing name of the GREAT MEDIATOR  
 for the promise of the holy Ghost, “until the  
 “ Spirit be poured upon us from on high (q);”  
 who can spread his divine influence far enough  
 to reclaim, not only a perverse guilty nation (r);  
 but is able, as in a moment, to change this present  
 scene of disorder, of sin and misery, into a world  
 of harmony, of righteousness and peace.

THE N shall true religion appear in its genuine  
 glory and beauty among us, and “ the kingdoms  
 “ of this world become the kingdoms of our God,  
 “ and of his Christ (s):” Or, as it is elegantly  
 expressed by Isaiah in all the beauty of prophe-  
 tic language, “ The wilderness and the solitary  
 “ place shall be glad; and the desert shall rejoice  
 “ and blossom as the rose: it shall blossom abun-  
 “ dantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing:  
 “ they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the  
 “ excellency of our God (t). For the Lord  
 “ shall

(p) Isaiah lxii. 6, 7. (q) Ibid. xxxii. 15. (r) Ibid.  
 lxvi. 8,—13. (s) Rev. xi. 15. (t) Isa. xxxv. 1, 2.



“ shall comfort Zion; he will comfort all her  
 “ waste places; and he will make her wilderness  
 “ like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the  
 “ Lord (u).”

AND in that day it shall be said to us, as to  
 Judah of old, “ Walk about Zion, and go round  
 “ about her, tell the towers thereof: mark ye  
 “ well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that  
 “ ye may tell it to the generations following:  
 “ for this God is our God for ever and ever;  
 “ he will be our guide even unto death (x).”

Now, unto this almighty all-sufficient God,  
 who hath been our dwelling-place in all ge-  
 nerations, a wall of fire round about us,  
 and the glory in the midst of us; unto  
 him be glory in the church, by Christ Je-  
 sus, throughout all ages, world without end.  
 A M E N.



(u) Isaiah li. 3. (x) Psalm xlviii. 12,—14.

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